

Why D.M. officials think they could have a winning NCAA bid

Bryce Miller, brmiller@dmreg.com 4:49 p.m. CDT August 6, 2014

The city of Des Moines is hoping the third time is a charm in its chase to host the NCAA men's basketball tournament — and is illustrating some added cha-ching to nudge the charm process along.

The Des Moines Area Sports Commission submitted a bid Wednesday to host the NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament in 2016, '17 and '18.

The city, which partnered with Iowa State and Global Spectrum, is making a run at the second and third rounds of March Madness, one of the most watched and coveted sporting events in the United States.

Dan Houston, president of retirement, insurance and financial services for Principal Financial Group, was selected as honorary chairperson for the local organizing committee. Houston gathered 30 letters of corporate support for the bid from every major employer in the metro area.

That show of business force is coupled with ongoing talks to build a new hotel adjacent to Wells Fargo Arena.

"This is really a full-court press to bring the NCAA men's basketball tournament to Des Moines," Houston said. "I have no doubt with my conversations with employers, they will step up and ensure the tournament is successful in all measures."

Representatives of the Greater Des Moines Convention and Visitors Bureau, Iowa Events Center and Greater Des Moines Partnership also made a trip to NCAA's Indianapolis headquarters in April to identify ways to raise its bid profile — financially and in all other ways.

Des Moines has hosted five NCAA events the past six years, including the highly successful Division I wrestling championships in March 2013 that generated an estimated \$15 million in economic impact.

"The NCAA folks are aware of the renovations to all the downtown hotels and our history with NCAA championships," said Greg Edwards, president and CEO of the Des Moines convention and visitors group. "We think the success of the wrestling championships can give us an edge, too."

Des Moines has hosted NCAA women's basketball, as well as three years of the outdoor track and field championships. The city also will be the site of the regional round of the Division I women's volleyball championships in December 2015.

Edwards declined to discuss other incentives in the bid because of the competitive and continuing selection process.

"We tweaked some things and added some bells and whistles (from past NCAA basketball bids)," he said.

Iowa State, which owns the state's longest current NCAA basketball streak, is the university sponsoring the bid. The Cyclones have appeared in each of the last three tournaments — winning at least one game each of those years.

"The excitement for college basketball in the state of Iowa — and at Iowa State University in particular — is at an all-time high," Iowa State athletic director Jamie Pollard said in a news release.

Houston, the honorary chairperson of the local organizing committee, said proof of such comprehensive backing from the business community could sway favor to Des Moines.

"This is the first time I can remember corporations weighing in, in a material way, saying we want to make this happen," he said.

Landing the NCAA men's tournament would soften the blow Des Moines suffered in December, when it found out bid attempts had failed for NCAA women's basketball, the Final Four round of women's volleyball and NCAA wrestling championships from 2015-18.

Edwards said the NCAA is scheduled to analyze men's basketball bids in November. He expects the city to find out its big-stage hoops fate in December.

Houston said this group of organizers is pushing harder than ever before to land the tournament.

"It's time to get Division I basketball here," he said.

Site selection process underway for 2016-18 tourney preliminary rounds

NCAA.com

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INDIANAPOLIS -- Bid specifications were made available Monday for prospective hosts of the preliminary rounds of the 2016, 2017 and 2018 Division I men's basketball championships, with the selection announcement for the First Four, second- and third-rounds and regional sites scheduled for November.

Hosts from NCAA Division I institutions or conferences have until August 6 to submit their bid materials. The NCAA Division I men's basketball committee and staff will analyze the bids and, if necessary, conduct site visits in September and October.

The committee will use evaluation criteria when selecting the sites and the hosts for the championship rounds including lodging options, airline service, previous history hosting NCAA championships and attendance potential. Each city must have an adequate number of full service hotel rooms within reasonable proximity to the competition venue, with the most competitive rates to accommodate teams, officials and the media. The cities must have appropriate airline service, with consideration given to sites with the highest frequency of daily arrivals and departures.

The committee will consider attendance figures, net receipts and the host's financial management from previous championships, and consideration may be given to a host or venue that has not hosted the tournament most recently. Host facilities must hold a minimum of 10,000 fans in order to be considered. Newly-constructed venues must be fully operational by May 2015 in order to host the 2016 championship, and by November 2015 to be eligible to host the 2017 or 2018 championships.

As the national tournament to determine the NCAA Division I men's basketball champion, sites will continue to be selected regionally across the country. Two sites from the East, South, Midwest and West regions will be chosen to host second- and third-round games, while one host from each region will be selected to host Sweet 16 and Elite Eight games.

"The tournament continues to be one of the world's most popular sporting events, so we anticipate dozens of cities bidding for the right to play a central role in March Madness," NCAA vice president for men's basketball Dan Gavitt said. "The site selection process is competitive, and we expect to get interest from cities with a long history of hosting the event, as well as others who want local college basketball fans to experience what it's like to have the tournament come to their communities."

The preliminary rounds site selection announcement coincides with the Final Four site selection process, which concludes in November with the unveiling of the sites for the 2017-2020 Final Fours. Eight finalists -- Atlanta, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, New Orleans, North Texas, Phoenix, San Antonio and St. Louis – were named in January.